

HERBERT KITSCHOLT, ZDENKA MANSFELDOVA, RADOSLAW MARKOWSKI AND GABOR TOKA, Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Competition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. £15.95 (pbk), xiv + 457pp. ISBN 0-521-65890-X.

Much debate on party system formation in post-communist East Central Europe has been clouded by difficulties reconciling clearly relevant, but often conflicting, cultural, historical and political factors, as well as by a lack of sustained comparative research in the region itself. *Post-Communist Party Systems* addresses both these deficiencies, developing a powerful comparative synthesis and applying it systematically to four national case studies: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria.

There are, the authors argue in Part I, two key issues to examine and account for when studying post-communist party systems: (1) the extent to which they are programmatically structured (rather than based on clientelism or charismatic leadership); and (2) variation in the structure of party competition in East Central Europe between cases. Both will, the authors argue, vary according to complex historical legacies embracing both the pre-communist and communist periods, as modified by institutional and economic choices made after transition. Their comparative typology sketches a series of historical pathways turning around several key variables: the level of country's social and political modernity before communism, it is argued, determines the type of communist rule it experienced; this in turn influences its mode of transition' from communism in 1989; modes of

transition (modified by transitional élites' post-1989 institutional choices) then shapes party system formation.

Pre-war social and economic modernity (including mass labour movements), which existed, for example, in Czechoslovakia, it is argued, produces tough 'bureaucratic-authoritarian' communism. In less advanced states such as Hungary and Poland, weaker (and hence more reform-inclined 'national-accommodative') regimes emerge. By contrast, the historically least advanced states in South Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria, develop a repressive, clientelistic and reform-averse form of 'patrimonial communism'.

By determining the distribution of actors, resources and incentives, each communist regime type also bequeaths a particular mode of transition from communism. Thus, while the 'national-accommodative' regimes of Hungary and Poland extricated themselves through negotiated transition with semi-legal oppositions in 1989, Czechoslovakia's hardline 'bureaucratic-authoritarian' regime imploded under popular pressure. By contrast, Bulgaria's 'patrimonial communism' had so neutralised opposition and social pressures that the ruling communists managed transition as 'pre-emptive strike' and thus remain in the political game.

Accumulated legacies of the pre-communist period, communism and the transition then finally shape the format of post-communist party systems. In the former 'national-accommodative' regimes of Hungary and Poland, incomplete pre-communist modernisation and broad regime-opposition consensus on the need for economic reform after 1989 produce a party system based on crosscutting cleavages over non-economic 'value' issues making politics a three-cornered fight between liberals, ex-communist 'social democrats' and national-populists. Former 'patrimonial communist' states such as Bulgaria, see a loosely structured bi-polar party system

opposing a pro-market, anti-communist and anti-market ex-communist blocs. Only in a formerly 'bureaucratic authoritarian' regime, such as Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic) - with no 'national-accommodation' before 1989 and no surviving communist élites after 1989 - is a conventional party politics of left and right based on distributional issues emerge to be anticipated.

In Parts II - IV the authors test these hypotheses using a variety of statistical techniques to analyse data from a cross-national surveys of specialists, party élites and party functionaries and opinion polling from in 1993-4. Their findings suggest that neither Downsian explanations seeing party system format as a product of competitive equilibria or institutional approaches highlighting the incentives of electoral systems properly explain variations in programmatic structuring between cases. Thus, rather than having a diffuse catch-all appeal as a Downsian approaches predict, electorally dominant parties in the three Central Europe cases are programmatically the most cohesive and distinct parties. Conversely, the weaknesses of programmatic structuring in Bulgarian party politics cannot be explained institutionally, by the incentives offered by Bulgaria's electoral system given these are similar in the three Central European cases. As far as patterns of competition are concerned, the book's empirical analysis broadly confirms the predictions of its comparative framework, although party-élites overstate socio-political cleavages compared to mass electorates. Nevertheless, electorates in the region generally exhibit a degree of 'programmatic structuring' not dissimilar to that in Western Europe, suggesting that much received wisdom about the inchoateness of post-communist public opinion is overstated.

However, do such broadly representative and responsive post-communist party systems offer effective governance? There is, suggests the analysis in Part V, no clear relationship between the two, although the persistence of a strong regime-opposition

cleavage (as in Bulgaria) or, a of lack of polarisation around economic issues (as in former 'national-accommodative' Hungary) may make the formation of stable, programmatically coherent coalitions more difficult. The book conclusions firm rebut both generic models and *tabula rasa* theories of post-communist politics. In form if not content, the authors argue, party systems in East Central Europe are comparable with those in Western Europe and research agendas should therefore shift towards the quality and consequences (rather than the mere sustainability) of post-communist democracy in the region.

*Post-Communist Party Systems* makes its central point - that legacies matter in post-communist party formation and that legacies and diverse - with great theoretical virtuosity and methodological rigour. Its substantive findings both confirm and elaborate earlier, more fragmentary research and link them in to wider questions concerning post-communist democracy. Its call for a more fully comparative politics of Western and Eastern Europe is both welcome and overdue. However, the book's framework of comparative historical legacies is, despite its sophistication, perhaps too neat in glossing over awkward moments of political contingency in the history of East Central Europe, that do not fit its schema. To take one example, the 'bureaucratic authoritarian' nature of the Czechoslovak regime in 1989, while undoubtedly related to the country's pre-communist administrative and social modernity, was as much a consequence of politics as deep historical structures: but for the narrowly taken decision of the Brezhnev's politburo to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968, the 'Prague Spring' would probably have retrenched into a 'national-accommodative' regime, similar to that of Hungary not 'bureaucratic authoritarianism'.

Despite conceding that legacies may fade in time and that the institutional choices and economic strategies adopted by reflexive political actors do play a role, the book's

underlying explanation seems overly deterministic. Are the party politics of East Central Europe in the 1990s really ultimately products of the social structures of the 1930s? The book also disappoints in its failure to consider party-society links institutionally other than as a brief afterthought and in ignoring party-interest group links completely. On the whole, however, its strengths clearly outweigh its weaknesses. Although greater in theoretical sweep than in the empirically-backed conclusions it can offer, the book thus represents an important milestone.

SEÁN HANLEY

*Brunel University.*